Grand Forks at 150

The First Fifty

Nikki Berg Burin

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This book is a Private Beta Version of
a future work destined to reflect
on 150 years of
Grand Forks, North Dakota.

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Grand Forks at 150

150 Short Essays on Grand Forks

The First Fifty

edited by
Nikki Berg Burin

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Introduction 0

In 1874, white settlers platted Grand Forks on the lands of the Pembina and Red Lake Bands of Ojibwe and the Dakota Oyate. To commemorate the sesquicentennial of the city's platting, fourteen University of North Dakota undergraduate students conducted archival research on the community exploring its vibrant and diverse history. Along the way, they came across episodes of joy, heartbreak, inclusivity, intolerance, innovation, devastation, resilience, and more. Inspired by the principle that local history matters — that it can vividly and powerfully connect the past to the present — the students distilled their findings into 150-word essays crafted with a public audience in mind. Subsequent contributors to this volume followed their lead. Collectively, their work showcases an eclectic mix of people, events, and establishments that dotted the city's first 150 years. As such, we hope these essays spark meaningful reflections and conversations about the past, present, and future of Grand Forks.

N.B.B.

A Youthful Resurgence in Post-WWI UND

1

The banks of the Coulée were crowded with students. Some had shown up hours earlier in anticipation of the annual freshman-sophomore battle. Throughout the weekend, young men would participate in games like pushball where a massive ball was pushed across goal-lines for points, and tug of war where the losers ended up in the Coulée. The winner of these games would have bragging rights over the other class. Because the area surrounding UND was largely undeveloped and the city center was a fair distance away, students created their own forms of entertainment. While games like pushball are now lost to time, there is a unique charm to this tradition and what it represents. Through these games, students were able to take pride in their school and their class and embrace the joyful and carefree moments of their youth allowing the student body to successfully recapture the nostalgic period before World War One.

N.A.

2 Grand Forks' Midcentury Schools

Grand Forks' midcentury schools embody a period of the country's history marked by sharp population increase, postwar prosperity, and an active national building program. The postwar baby boom, coupled with a trend of rural migration to towns and cities, precipitated the need for more schools. Between 1948 and 1967, the city added eight elementary schools, two middle schools, and a high school as neighborhoods expanded to the south and west. They maintain a common architectural canon typical of the Modern movement, characteristic of mid-twentieth century American public architecture. These one-story brick structures with flat roofs show a distinct departure from the multi-story schools of earlier decades. This new style was reflective of evolving educational principles emphasizing student learning and health as well as efficiency of design and construction. Sprawling, low-elevation designs replete with long banks of windows maximized natural light and often overlooked landscaped gardens, playgrounds, or nearby public parks.

S.C.

"It Is Infinitely Better To Walk Your Way Alone..." 3

Poet Florence Henry lived in Grand Forks, North Dakota, for 45 years. In the early twentieth century, Florence wrote about her fears of living in a lonely marriage. Not only did her poetry reflect her skepticism of marriage, but Henry's will also stipulated that her surviving heir had to divorce in order to inherit a trust fund after the poet's death. Though North Dakota judiciary nullified her estate's stipulations, Henry's poems demonstrate how she and other American women understood and embraced changing attitudes regarding marriage, especially the modern idea that marriage should provide companionship. The percentage of Grand Forks divorcees nearly doubled between 1910 and 1920 and then doubled again between 1920 and 1930, suggesting that there was a fair amount of marital dissatisfaction among the city's women. The local publication and favorable reception of Henry's poetry suggest that women valued her work and saw themselves reflected in her writing.

Em.B.

4 Students on Strike: UND Students Respond to the Vietnam War

On May 4th, 1970, four students at Kent State University in Ohio were shot and killed while protesting the Vietnam War. This led to a student strike across the United States, UND included. The very next day, May 5th, 1970, 500 people gathered in front of Babcock Hall with a list of demands for the university to take action against the Vietnam War. They asked that ROTC no longer provide academic credit, for the military to stop recruiting at the Memorial Union, that President Starcher formally demand an end to U.S. military presence in Southeast Asia, and that campus police be disarmed. The crowd eventually decreased to 150 people who continued to strike after the initial rally. Faculty in the History and Philosophy departments issued official statements supporting students' right to protest. Although their demands were not met, this rally remains as one of the largest in Grand Forks' history.

A.L.

The Flourishing of Grand Forks in Early 1900s

5

Due to the inspirational vision of Alexander Griggs, a founding father of Grand Forks, the citizens of the city embarked on an abitious project of developing the city which resulted in a significant transformation. This change was driven by visionary planners and enterprising entrepreneurs. Residents shared a vision of a thriving urban hub that was achieved through strategic planning, infrastructure investments, and an active commercial atmosphere. Furthermore, Grand Forks' strategic location on the Red River and its connection to the Great Northern Railway fueled growth by stimulating economic development and attracting settlers and businesses. The population increased from 8,300 to 12,500 residents by the end of the year 1910.

Infrastructure thrived with expanding streetcar networks, modern waterworks facilities, and the founding of the influential *Grand Forks Herald* newspaper. The construction of the Grand Forks County Courthouse symbolized these advancements. This pivotal era epitomized the city's resolute commitment to progress and development.

A.S.

6 A Charles Thurber Lynching Bystander Narrative

The people of Grand Forks are starting to gather. There are talks of breaking into the jail. Charles Thurber claims to be innocent. The masses say otherwise. They call him many names. They say he tried to hurt a girl. A farmer made a claim. They all agree he is guilty. What will happen? The city discusses their options. Her people are angry. The mob of 1882 is growing larger. What is going on in their heads? A man's fate is in the hands of the government. The people don't like that answer. They've seen the papers' reports on 32 lynchings. Black men get treatment like no other. The crowd is getting restless. They've taken the accused into their hands. They are dragging him towards the river—to the Saint Paul, Minneapolis, Manitoba Railroad bridge. Day breaks, the mob disperses. A soul taken from the Earth. A story left untold.

K.J.

Grand Forks' Halloween Celebrations in the Early 20th Century

7

From the late 19th to early 20th Century, the celebration of Halloween grew in popularity across the United States. In Grand Forks, newspapers originally covered controversial paganistic traditions and origins of the holiday. As time progressed, newspapers shifted towards covering extravagant Halloween parties and local pranks involving ticktacks. A ticktack was a device that made a tapping sound on a window by using a weight hung next to the window manipulated by a string. Over the years, homeowners became increasingly frustrated with such pranks. To combat this the *Grand Forks Herald* ran two stories in 1904 about homeowners shooting young pranksters around the country. This fear tactic did not work, however, as Halloween pranks stayed popular in Grand Forks and beyond until the commercialization of Halloween in the 1930s and 1940s. While Halloween celebrations are widespread in the city today, early Forkers were dubious about this controversial and mischievous holiday.

N.A.

8 From Shields to Band-Aids: The Knights of Malta in Grand Forks

It's Friday night, 1899, and the Knights of Malta are hosting their first-ever ball in Grand Forks. The locals are ecstatic, showing up in droves to welcome the world's oldest knightly order into their city.

From its humble beginnings as a hospital for pilgrims in 11th-century Jerusalem, the Catholic Malta Order expanded its humanitarian work into America during the 19th century, eventually appointing Grand Forks judge, William Becker, to assemble Knights in the Midwest. Forkers let their imaginations soar as they wondered what national attention this might bring them.

While the Malta Knights did host grand parties, they were best known for their charity. They pooled money to fund "secret work," which turned out to involve the establishment of numerous medical centers and elderly homes locally and globally. These secret good deeds remind us that we all can choose to heal rather than harm, even when no one is looking.

C.G.

Presidential Visits

9

Grand Forks has hosted six sitting presidents on their visits to the city. The first was Franklin Roosevelt in 1937 to dedicate the WPA county fair grandstand. In 1952, Harry S. Truman stopped in Grand Forks on a whistle-stop tour to campaign for Adlai Stevenson's presidential campaign, touting economic strength, agricultural recovery, and social programs. In 1963, John F. Kennedy spoke at the University of North Dakota on issues of conservation and natural resources, and received an honorary Doctor of Laws degree from President Starcher. Richard Nixon visited Grand Forks twice, first as Vice President in 1960 speaking at UND, and then as President campaigning for Thomas Kleppe for U.S. Senate with a brief stop at the airport. Ronald Reagan chose Grand Forks for a campaign rally with Senator Mark Andrews in October of 1986. Finally, Bill Clinton visited to deliver remarks for flood relief efforts following the devastating flood.

S.C.

10 Wings Over Grand Forks: GFK Airport

Grand Forks International Airport (GFK), established in 1964, serves as a crucial aviation hub in North Dakota. Norman Midboe laid its foundation, marking the beginning of its growth. GFK's historical milestone was Northwest Orient's maiden landing, propelling its evolution into a vital connectivity hub that fuels Grand Forks' progress.

GFK significantly contributes to the city's economic prosperity by attracting industries and creating jobs. Its partnership with the University of North Dakota's aerospace program fosters talent and research, shaping the future of aviation. More than a transit point, GFK symbolizes aspiration, business opportunities, initiative, and connectivity. Its accessibility integrates it into the community, transcending physical boundaries. Furthermore, the airport enriches Grand Forks' cultural tapestry, shaping the city as an inclusive global community.

In essence, Grand Forks International Airport symbolizes advancement, cooperation, and communal harmony. From its origins to its current stature, it elevates Grand Forks globally and leaves an enduring legacy.

A.S.

The Fight to Save Arbor Park

11

Arbor Park in downtown Grand Forks was built in 2001. Many of the park's features, like the stone pathways, were salvaged from the ruins of the 1997 flood and the arts community adopted it as a place to share their art. When development groups proposed demolishing the park to build a condominium in 2016, the decision was put in the hands of voters. The arts community fought hard to maintain the park and its beauty. The "Save Arbor Park" campaign advocates used their art to persuade voters to protect the park. They argued that it was more than just green space; it was a haven for a thriving community of artists and a celebration of public arts for the Grand Forks community. When the vote to demolish the park passed, the Grand Forks community lost much more than a park—it lost an epicenter of public art and community engagement.

M.G.

12 Speaking Louder than Reason

In the 1920s, the minister of the First Presbyterian Church, F. Halsey Ambrose, preached the word of the Ku Klux Klan as righteous. This minister convinced his community that Catholics and racial minorities were trying to push "un-American" ideals in the 1920s. At the time, over 75% of the community was white and Catholics were a religious minority. However, many Forkers were swayed by Ambrose's misleading information. North Dakota passed an Anti-Klan law in 1923 but this did little to stop the growing of Klan members from getting publicly appointed positions. One instance of this was in 1926, when the public voted to allot four out of the five city commission seats to KKK members. The Ku Klux Klan maintained local power until they were nationally denounced just prior to the 1930s. Many opposed the KKK locally, but it took a nation to end their hateful tyranny over Grand Forks.

S.H.

1992 Homecoming Parade Incident

13

The University of North Dakota adopted the Fighting Sioux mascot in 1930. By the late 1980s, calls to change the nickname increased due to its harmful impact on Indigenous people.

The 1992 Homecoming parade brought these issues to public attention. Bystanders witnessed the members of Sigma Alpha Epsilon and Alpha Tau Omega fraternities verbally harassing individuals on the UND Indian Association float. The fraternities also executed the "tomahawk chop," an offensive motion UND had stated it would not tolerate from the campus community. In a letter written on behalf of Indigenous students, it was made clear that the actions of these fraternities had deeply upset them. This letter requested a public apology from the University and the fraternities. Both fraternities apologized but neither faced any discipline from the university or national headquarters. This left those affected unsatisfied and fueled their fight against the mascot, which would last another 20 years.

M.G.

14 The DeRoche Block (now Hampton Apts)

The DeRoche Block on Fifth Avenue N. is a Mission Revival-style apartment building constructed between 1892 and 1897 just prior to the Second Great Dakota Boom. Its historic name reflects the building's original owner, Leon DeRoche, who also owned a drug and jewelry store, and later bicycles. It is the only standing turn-of-the-century apartment block that is not part of a historic district, and it is believed to be one of the oldest standing apartment buildings in Grand Forks, predating the better-known Dinnie Apartments and Skarsbo Apartments. The wood-framed stucco building originally contained seven two-story apartments which were later divided into fourteen. It was constructed in the working-class Near Northside Neighborhood largely surrounded by single family homes. Census data provided valuable details of the socio-cultural makeup of the residents showing a range of ethnic backgrounds, occupations, and family units, revealing more of Grand Forks immigrant, early settlement, and underrepresented histories.

S.C.

The Northern Pacific's Place in North Dakota History

15

The second railroad company that passed through Grand Forks, the Northern Pacific Railroad, was founded by one of North Dakota's most important figures, James J. Hill. He and his company started laying down tracks in Fargo, North Dakota, in 1872, arriving at Grand Forks in 1880. When Hill and the railroad arrived in Grand Forks the population of the city was 30. By 1886, Grand Forks was connected to Winnipeg, St. Paul, and even to Montana by train. The Northern Pacific Railroad got a good bit of help from the agricultural economy in its early years. It gave them both financial stability and the ability to keep expanding. The Northern Pacific, in turn, gave farmers in the area the life-changing ability to sell to the highest bidder. This wonderful symbiotic relationship between the railroads and the farmers was the backbone of North Dakota's economy, and it continues on today.

S.K.

16 En Avant

Creating a company to rival the Royal Winnipeg Ballet would be unattainable if not for the dedication of Kay Novak. After attending a performance in Canada, she approached students at her dance school in Grand Forks and found like-minded individuals. She was astounded to find that enough male interest was available to freely choose any ballet program she wished. In 1960 Novak created the Grand Forks Ballet Company. The Grand Forks community was highly supportive of this project; ten local merchants funded the posters printed and a jeweler sponsored the tickets for the first show, "Romeo and Juliet Fantasia." The show's success established the Grand Forks Ballet Company as a serious ballet company, a first in the state and one that continues to train dancers today. With Kay Novak and the community's passion for the arts, they were officially deemed the North Dakota Ballet Company in 1966 by Governor William Guy.

S.H.

New Beer's Eve

17

North Dakota entered the Union as a dry state. However, locals were known for drinking and engaging in drunken brawls in the bars and back alleys of East Grand Forks where liquor was legal. There were upwards of 58 businesses that served alcohol in East Grand Forks before 1915, when the entire country entered the Prohibition era. Locals absolutely loved to drink; it was a staple of citywide recreation. One liquor substitute, wood alcohol, turned into a deadly epidemic. In a city only two hours from Grand Forks, four people died due to wood alcohol poisoning. The seller claimed they removed all toxins from it, which doctors contradicted. On April 6, 1933. Prohibition officially came to an end. That night a population of 17,000 locals convened over 100,000 bottles of beer. "New Beer's Eve" was a night when locals gathered and celebrated the end of The Prohibition as a community.

L.B.-S.

18 Anna Kirk

In 1925, Anna Kirk became the first woman to serve as a juror on a grand jury in Grand Forks County during a time when North Dakota women could only vote on school matters. As a prominent suffrage leader, Kirk led a coalition of women's rights activists who argued for women's engagement in formal politics. As she once said, "Because I am I, a thinking intelligent human being, I feel that I should have equal rights with other human beings. The accident of birth should not debar me from this privilege [of being allowed to vote]." She advocated for the passage of a national suffrage amendment by distributing suffrage materials, publishing newspaper editorials, and giving speeches to large audiences. Though often overlooked in Grand Forks history, Anna Kirk was a major contributor to the ratification of the 19th Amendment in 1920 and created a local legacy of women's political engagement.

Cl.H.

Racing at Grand Forks Fair in 1921

19

Racing culture was a very prevalent part of community culture in 1920s Grand Forks. Smaller horse races were normally held on a weekly basis, but in February of 1920 the North Dakota State Fair Association announced that the state fair was to be held in Grand Forks in July of 1921. With the event coming to town, the Grand Forks Fair Association Secretary, E.R. Montgomery, announced that it would be the biggest racing event with the largest purses in Northwest history. Farmers from across the state came with horses to race, while North Dakotans of all backgrounds came to place bets on those they believed would win them the largest profit. Such a large racing venue in Grand Forks was extremely beneficial in boosting the local economy. Racing continues to be a significant part of Grand Forks culture, as can be seen in the large crowds that attend the River Cities Speedway.

Ch.H.

20 Pat Owens and the 1997 Flood

Grand Forks mayor Patricia Owens became best known for her leadership during the historic 1997 flood, when the Red River rose over 50 feet, covering the city in water. In an interview Owens stated that, "[we] were more prepared than we have ever been[...]" but despite the careful planning, the river crested higher than anyone expected. Working with multiple agencies, Owens made the toughest decision of her career and evacuated 50,000 people from their homes. The flooding devoured homes and destroyed businesses downtown, leaving people with nothing. Owens worked with the U.S. Congress and because of her efforts, she was able to secure 500 million dollars in relief. It is important to know that there were many local heroes that stepped up during the devastating flood of '97, but perhaps none more notable than Mayor Owens, who guided the city through disaster and helped them rebuild after tragedy.

Ch.H.

Midsommar Festival in Grand Forks

21

The Greater Grand Forks community has been working on strengthening its relationship with its sister city Sarpsborg, Norway, since the early 20th century. An example of this connection is the Midsommar festival, which has been held periodically since 1920, and was most recently celebrated in 2007. The purpose of the festival is to promote a good harvest season, aligning closely with the farming culture of the area. This festival centers around dancing, picking flowers, and celebrating loudly, with the intent of dispelling bad energy. A large pagan cross which is dressed in colorful flowers creates a jovial environment. These festivals attracted large crowds and connected many locals to their Scandinavian ancestry. The larger Grand Forks population saw a renewal of ties with Sarpsborg, their sister city. The Midsommar festival has been an important part of their connection which allows Grand Forks to adopt traditions that strengthen its relationships and encourages the development of a rich culture.

L.B.-S.

22 A Repugnant Case

Early 20th century Grand Forks could be a dangerous place for young women. In the early hours of the morning on June 9, 1917, a young woman named Adelaide Chapman was brutally raped and assaulted by five of the city's prominent young men. While the perpetrators faced minimal consequences, Adelaide was punished by the legal system, which blamed her for the attack despite being deceived and brutalized during the trial process. The judge accused her of having a child's mind and a woman's body, insinuated she could be a prostitute, and suggested she consented by accepting a ride from five men at night. Though some community members were outraged by the crime and Adelaide's treatment by the court, such treatment was not unusual for the time. This was a manifestation of the nation's rape culture, which held female victims of sexual assault accountable for the actions of their perpetrators.

Cl.H.

J.F.T. O'Connor, Grand Forks Native and U.S. Comptroller

23

President Franklin D. Roosevelt visited Grand Forks in 1937 where he heaped praise on the Near Northside Neighborhood's most famous son, J. F. T. O'Connor, noting, "He kept the banks sound and your money safe." That year, O'Connor called for that to be his epitaph, and he was buried at Calvary Cemetery. O'Connor served as U. S. Comptroller at Roosevelt's request. A lawyer, he had taught at the UND Law School and served as a legislator in 1917 and 1920 before an unsuccessful gubernatorial race and U.S. Senate bid. After moving to California, he joined a politically active law firm, and in 1932, he managed FDR's California presidential campaign. O'Connor was U.S. Comptroller during the turbulent 1933 "bank holiday" when more than 1,400 national banks were declared insolvent and denied permission to reopen. He was responsible for reorganizing those that could be saved and liquidating those that could not.

D.M.

24 Women Helping Women

The Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA) was founded in England in 1855 and made its way to Grand Forks in 1903. A group of women gathered at George B. Winship's home to brainstorm what women in the community were lacking. Their mission, symbolized by the YWCA's blue triangle, was threefold: first, to provide single women with a safe place to become educated in domestic skills; second, to help women in the community pursue an education by going to college; and third, to allow free conversation about Christianity and share in prayer. Financially, they chose not to ask the public for funds and instead were self-sustained via membership dues and gifts. In 1906, the Grand Forks YWCA was officially recognized and received its national charter. The YWCA of Grand Forks spent decades helping women in the community before merging with the YMCA in 1970 to form a Y Family Center.

S.H.

Dancing the War Away

25

It was Saturday night in February 1918, and teenager Lila Warnken was at the University of North Dakota gymnasium for a dance hosted by the Men's Glee Club. With the tragedies of World War I on everyone's minds, she was likely looking forward to a carefree night with her friends. A flurry of young men approached her to pencil in their names on her dance card, but it was Bob Benner who took the small attached pencil and requested six of her fourteen dances. Since he asked properly, social decorum required that she accept, but that wasn't a problem since Bob appeared to be one of her favorite partners. Like youth across the country, they enjoyed dances such as the One-Step, Foxtrot, and Moonlight Waltz. For a few hours, Lila Warnken was lost in the twirling of dresses and the pull of the music as she danced the war away.

Cl.H.

26 Baukol Historic District

A small residential district tucked into the Riverside neighborhood is Grand Forks' first postwar multi-property development. Returning serviceman and contractor, Brooks Baukol, partnered with several financial backers to purchase approximately forty lots along North Third St. and North Fourth St. between Park and Alpha Avenues. Twenty-two building permits were issued to Baukol in 1946, and he set about constructing modest 800-square-foot homes that would meet the mortgage standards set by the G.I. Bill. This federal program was designed to help millions of returning servicemen get back on their feet with housing, education, and job training. The second phase of construction in the following years illustrated the shift from early postwar subsidized housing to progressively midcentury styles including ranch architectural designs, attached garages, and low elevation with orientation towards the street. The 1950 census data shows that all homes that were occupied at the time of the census were veteran households.

S.C.

Engineers of the Sandbag Castle: The Flood of 1997

27

Amidst the deluge's relentless roar,
When waters surged at Grand Forks' door,
A valiant force, a steadfast band,
The National Guard, a hero stands.

Their uniforms, a beacon bright,
Amidst the gloom, a guiding light,
They built a fortress, walls of sand,
Against the flood's relentless hand.

As torrents rose and homes were swayed,
The Guard stood strong, yet undismayed.
Mud-stained boots and weary smiles,
They labored on through every trial.

But even as the waters waned,
Their duty stayed, their efforts trained,
They labored on, tireless grace,
To restore the city's hallowed space.

Their hero's mantle, not just in might,
But in the kindness, shining bright,
Little gestures, soothing words,
A symphony of hope they stirred.

In Grand Forks' tale, forever etched,
The Guard, whose intrepid spirits fetched
A portrait painted, a story told,
Of courage vast, of hearts of gold.

Thank you to the heroes of Grand Forks.

K.J.

28 How Students Survived the Depression

Did you know that during the Great Depression, students could pay their tuition with farm produce? This was just one of the university's many inventive solutions to ensure impoverished students could still get an education. The school's biggest assistance project, which received national attention, was Camp Depression. Camp Depression was a compound of train cars that were converted into housing for male students living below the poverty line and helped draw in students from across the state. In order to help them save money and pay for housing, the men of Camp Depression worked campus jobs. Carpooling was a popular option for students heading home for semester breaks. Another money-saving tactic was borrowing textbooks from the campus library. Some Camp Depression residents even left with more money than they started with. When looking back, most students had fond memories of the camp; they enjoyed being around people from a similar background.

A.L.

City Center Mall: Grand Forks' Retail Hub

29

Established in 1978, City Center Mall served as a vital retail center in Grand Forks, catering to a population of over 50,000 people. While it faced competition from rival malls like Columbia Mall and South Forks Plaza, it initially thrived as a bustling downtown hub of commerce.

To maintain its competitive edge, the mall's management proposed a redevelopment project, envisioning the modernization of the shopping complex with upscale retailers and overall enhancements. However, a different destiny awaited. In April of 1997, the devastating Red River flood swept through, submerging the City Center Mall and causing extensive damage. This flood marked a tragic conclusion to its era of retail dominance.

Despite ongoing discussions about redevelopment, the mall never resurfaced. Its story stands as a poignant testament to the enduring impact of natural disasters and, although it no longer stands, the City Center Mall left an indelible mark on Grand Forks' history.

A.S.

30 Home Away from Home at the University of North Dakota

The University of North Dakota (UND) has always worked to attract new students with modern buildings and grounds, while also reflecting attitudes and expectations of a given time. Early accommodations separated students by gender. Nineteenth-century student housing included dormitories east of the English Coulee. Men's dormitories, like Budge Hall, included residential rooms and fitness spaces, while Davis Hall housed women, the university's president, and a dining hall. Social change and structural deterioration necessitated demolition. From 1963 to 2003, UND closed eight dorms and opened thirteen new residence halls. While previous generations wanted distinct places to live, learn, and socialize, modern students desired holistic growth. For example, UND opened the Landing Zone—a versatile social space connecting Brannon—McVey, and West Halls, on October 6, 2023. The university's refashioning of its physical environment creates a self-sustaining legacy by investing in students, and in return, receiving alumni support to advance its mission.

Em.B.

Great War and Grand Forks

31

The Great War was fought by the Entente Powers and the Central Powers from 1914 to 1918. The United States entered the war in 1917 on the side of the Entente. Whether on the home front or on the Western Front, Grand Forks played a very important role in securing victory for the United States. At first the people of Grand Forks, like other North Dakotans, were reluctant when it came to entering the war. However, that changed in 1917, when local residents helped the war effort by buying war bonds from groups like the Four-Minute Men. Grand Forks newspapers would publish the names of men within the county who were supposed to report for selective service, while UND would act as a training camp for those who were drafted into the war. When war was declared, Grand Forks answered the call of duty to help achieve victory for the Allies.

C.M.

32 Golden Hour Halibut

Secret recipes are nothing new, but once in a while the memory of a meal takes on urban legend status. Golden Hour Halibut is one such recipe. The Gold Hour restaurant was located in the old Elks Lodge (now the Olive Ann hotel). A closely guarded secret for years, some claim to have the recipe, but are they all the same? Here is one, perhaps THE version.

Tip: thin sliced halibut cooks faster.
Flour Mixture:
1 Cup Flour
½ Teaspoon Salt
½ Teaspoon Black Pepper
½ Teaspoon Paprika
½ Teaspoon Poultry Seasoning

Directions:
Coat fish with flour mixture, shake off the excess, and put it on a plate lined with wax paper. Refrigerate for half an hour.

Add ½ Teaspoon Baking Powder to the remaining flour mixture. Then add enough cold water to form a thin batter. Dip the halibut fillets in the batter and deep fry until golden brown.

S.C.

Whispering Bones: The Legend of Henry Wheeler

33

Dr. Henry Wheeler was an influential figure in Grand Forks and North Dakota history. Dr. Wheeler opened his own practice as a surgeon, won a campaign for mayor, and held many different leadership positions as a Freemason. While these accomplishments are impressive, a prized memento that Dr. Wheeler always kept close to him suggests that he was especially proud of his time as a Wild West hero. In his office, Wheeler claimed to possess the skeleton of Clell Miller—a member of the notorious Jesse James gang. Dr. Wheeler encountered Miller in 1876 during the gang's robbery in Northfield, Minnesota, where he shot and killed Miller as the gang attempted to escape. It is speculated that Dr. Wheeler dug up the dead body of Miller and used it as a cadaver during his time in medical school. Legend claims he displayed his prized possession in his Grand Forks medical practice.

N.A.

34 Votes For Women!

In front of the Grand Forks County Courthouse, there is a marker dedicated to Grand Forks Suffragists. The road to women's suffrage in Grand Forks was a long one. Two prominent suffragists in town were Dr. Cora Smith Eaton and Mrs. Sara Emma Barnes Smith, daughter and mother respectively. On April 12, 1888, seventy-five women and men crowded into the Grand Forks County Courthouse, answering the two women's call to action. This meeting started the Grand Forks Women's Suffrage Association, the first in the state. In 1890, this mother-daughter duo became the first women to vote in Grand Forks, but only in school affairs as stipulated by law. Dr. Smith Eaton went on to do national suffrage work, and in 1913, she served as an officer on the National Council of Women Voters. A year before it was granted on the national level, North Dakota granted women suffrage on December 1st, 1919.

A.L.

Public Pride for Grand Forks Public Library

35

Grand Forks' first library opened on May 5, 1900, in a rented space at the Odd Fellows Temple. In 1901, library board president Frank Wilder along with Mayor James Dinnie wrote letters to business magnate and philanthropist Andrew Carnegie requesting funding for a new library building. It wasn't until 1903 that Carnegie generously donated $22,700 for this new structure. These funds were donated with the caveat that $2,270 would be allocated annually for maintenance. In its origin, the library included a "bright reading room" and 500 books for "people of good deportment." By 1972, the downtown library had extended to 35,075 square feet with 74,000 books. That same year, Grand Forks outgrew the original Carnegie Library, and it was razed after a new location was chosen for a larger building. Grand Forks' constant support of its public library is clear proof of its citizens' desire to learn and preserve knowledge.

M.G.

36 United in Wisdom and Compassion

The 1960s and 1970s were a tumultuous era in the United States, filled with issues of racial and religious discrimination. In the face of these nationwide struggles, the Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of Grand Forks built an alternative community in small-town America. More than anything, they desired universal brotherhood and sisterhood among their members, regardless of race or religion. People of all backgrounds and identities attended their lectures about philosophical and social issues.

This fellowship's very existence reveals the diversity of Grand Forks during the 1960s and 1970s, shining a light on how much the city had grown since it was first founded. Yet, the Unitarian Universalists' campaign against racism and prejudice also implies that not everyone was treated fairly in Grand Forks. But this group stood up for what was right, remaining united in wisdom and compassion. Though small in number, they are still engaged in this important work today.

C.G.

Controversy over Ralph Engelstad Arena

37

In 1998, Ralph Engelstad donated 100 million dollars to the University of North Dakota. Half of this money was supposed to go towards the school's academic goals, but the entire sum ended up being contributed to the school's new hockey facility. This created controversy on campus, with one professor stating that "Engelstad would probably die rather than see some of his money go to academic ends." At the same time, many people also disagreed with the arena's profuse display of the Sioux logo. Several university professors tried to organize a boycott of the logo. Engelstad got word of what was happening and wrote an angry letter to the university. Engelstad stated that if the university banned the Sioux logo, he would stop construction and let the half-built arena be destroyed by the weather. The conflict surrounding the arena's construction complicates its impact, but it remains a staple of the city.

Ch.H.

38 Anna Eva Fay(ke)'s Cloudy Crystal Ball

In 1896, proclaimed psychic Anna Eva Fay convinced a Grand Forks crowd that she could read minds by answering their private written questions. Thomas Skelly, a skeptic, discovered the secret behind her answers. She had the unsuspecting audience write on carbon paper! But this shocking revelation had little effect on Grand Forks' wide interest in spiritualism in the late 19th century. Decades after the Davenport brothers popularized magic in America, Fay learned that the people of Grand Forks were as enthralled as ever by the occult. Arraigned in jewelry and gold-trimmed clothes, she repeatedly sold out the opera house. Her act consisted of a plethora of incredible sights, from induced somnolence to astonishing prophecies. She was so convincing that even some scientists believed she was a genuine psychic. It was only after she retired that she finally dropped the charade and confessed to Houdini that she faked every supernatural feat.

C.G.

Old Water Treatment Plant

39

The city's first water infrastructure, the Waterworks Power House, appears on the 1888 Sanborn Fire Insurance map on the east side of the intersection of S. Third Street and Franklin Avenue. It was moved to the opposite side of S. Third with the construction of a new facility in 1939, and subsequent phases in 1956, 1968, and 1984. The expansion and modernization of the critical infrastructure reflects the city's response to the postwar population boom and development to the south and addressing the federal standards for water safety. Mayor Oscar Lunseth oversaw the first major expansion in the 1950s when an agreement was reached between Grand Forks and the Department of Defense to provide water to the newly established Grand Forks Airforce Base fifteen miles to the west. Badly inundated in 1997, the complex was finally decommissioned in 2020 with the construction of a new facility west of the interstate.

S.C.

40 Feminine Freedom

On October 15, 1904, Taugbol Sisters & Co. opened in the Clifford Annex on the corner of DeMers Avenue and South Fourth Street in Grand Forks. The department store specialized in tailoring and millinery services for women. Mathilda and Gina Taugbol started their business by leveraging their economic and social connections, as well as their knowledge of and influence on women's fashion. In the face of traditionalists who believed they belonged in the home, the sisters created a reputable space for ladies to socialize during a time when American women faced challenges finding acceptable locations to publicly gather. The Taugbols deliberately created a space for women outside of the domestic sphere and simultaneously encouraged female entrepreneurship. Their decision motivated other women in Grand Forks and beyond to pursue entrepreneurship, setting the foundation for organizations like the University of North Dakota's Women in Business and the North Dakota Women's Business Center.

Em.B.

The Woman's Christian Temperance Union

41

The Woman's Christian Temperance Union (WCTU) was a national movement founded in 1874. By the early twentieth century, the WCTU had become a powerful group advocating for prohibition reforms and had an active chapter in Grand Forks. Anna Kirk, a local suffrage leader, was active in the WCTU, writing articles that were published in the local newspaper. In one she stated, "...it is the right and it ought to be the purpose of every woman to demand the ballot that she may use it as an instrument of power for the elevation of right, the annihilation of wrong, and the protection of children." North Dakota was considered a dry state, although this was not always practiced. The WCTU knew that if women with similar values could vote, the prohibition laws would not be overturned. The union fought to protect the city's dry status, while advocating for women's suffrage.

G.B.

42 E is for Elementary... F is for Flooding... G is for Grand Forks

The 1997 Red River Flood impacted thousands of people in Grand Forks, including students who shared memories of it with their hero Mayor Pat Owens. An eighth grader from St. John's Catholic School wrote a story in which the main character recalled hearing sirens that woke him during the night, his family racing to a shelter, and the people who helped them. Another book by a third-grade class revamps the alphabet. They write, "E is for Evacuate... F is for the Big Flood..." Some fifth graders who moved to Mayville after the flood wrote about Mayor Owens as their role model. Fifth graders from Century Elementary wrote a book of essays about what the mayor's message of "Keep the Faith" meant to them. Kids from Grand Forks went through a lot in 1997 and were thankful for Mayor Owens' service and the efforts of a community that came together to help everyone.

G.B.

The Grand Forks Election of 1882

43

The mayoral election of 1882 was the second ever to take place in Grand Forks. It didn't go exactly as planned; many people forgot it was election day, and an unexpected candidate prevailed. Those running were Mayor William Brown and Captain Michael McCormack. Brown, the incumbent mayor, was nominated by the city commission to re-run and was favored to win. McCormack—who was well known in local politics—joined the election last minute. Brown was pressed to make a couple of concerning pledges, which are lost to history, that would have secured his win. He refused, and McCormack won. The next day, the newspaper read, "...A Slim Vote, and a Combination of Trickery and Chicanery Defeats a Good Man for Mayor." While the "trickery" did affect the outcome of the election, many citizens simply forgot to vote. History serves as a reminder that in every election, every vote matters.

G.B.

44 The Cushman Classic

Established in 1997, the Cushman Classic annual football game between Grand Forks Central and Red River High School is played in honor of 1956 GFC graduate Cliff Cushman. A record-setting high school track star and NCAA 400-meter hurdle champion at the University of Kansas, Cushman went on to win the silver medal in the 1960 Olympics. After tripping over a hurdle in the 1964 Olympic trials and failing to make the team, he penned an open letter to the youth of Grand Forks challenging them to set high goals for themselves. The letter is emblazoned on a memorial on the north end of Cushman Field. The football game, which is the first annual high school "classic" in North Dakota, is highlighted by tailgaiting, kids' activities, fireworks, the pre-kickoff ringing of a brass locomotive bell, and a traveling trophy. Cushman's alma mater GFC was the 14-7 victor in the inaugural game.

M.B.

The "Social Evil" in Grand Forks

45

In 1882, sounds of construction filled the streets of Grand Forks. The city was experiencing a building boom as enterprise and immigration soared. Kate Gray, a manifestation of both trends, built a small cottage in Traill's addition (today's Near Southside neighborhood) and operated a small business whose diverse patrons reportedly included some of the city's highest-ranking elected officials. However, for many residents, her residence and success were causes of dismay and *The Daily Herald* publicly cheered when Gray was ousted from the community the following year. The city's heavy investments in public improvements included not only the building of sidewalks and waterworks, but also the removal of people who threatened its good reputation. Foreshadowing the social and ideological divisions of the Prohibition era, one segment of Grand Forks forced "Big Kate" and women like her to leave their homes, while another followed them to their new brothels across the river.

N.B.B.

46 Grand Forks Votes for a New Valley Middle School

Valley Middle School on Grand Forks' north-end was built in 1955. By 2023, it was an outdated and inequitable place to teach and learn. In response, the School Board held a city-wide referendum on whether to construct a new Valley. To pass, sixty percent of voters had to vote yes. This high bar had tripped up comparable referendums across North Dakota. Undaunted, supporters launched a VOTE YES campaign. Youngsters contributed to it as did Valley teachers. As Election Day neared, VOTE YES pressed its case, explaining, "You may never cast a more high-leverage ballot than in this referendum. Office-holders come-and-go, but this contest is generational in scope. And in a low-turnout election, every vote matters immensely." The referendum passed. The margin of victory was 211 ballots in a community with over 50,000 residents. As VOTE YES gratefully remarked, "Each gesture of support moved the needle and ultimately made the difference."

E.B.

Traill's Addition

47

Before Grand Forks County was surveyed, residents were regarded as squatters. But in January 1874, land was officially opened to settlement. One of the earliest plats in the developing township was Traill's Addition bounded by Belmont Rd and Cottonwood St between 1st and 4th Avenues South, which became a predominately Jewish neighborhood. The original deed was signed in October 1878 by landowner, Walter J. S. Traill, a Canadian who had worked as an agent for the Hudson's Bay Company at multiple posts including Grand Forks. He was briefly imprisoned due to his part in the Louis Riel Rebellion at Fort Garry in Manitoba, and was subsequently expelled from Canada in 1870. Traill's Addition is believed to be the first plat to align with directional cardinal points rather than those that follow the general direction of the Red River such as the Original Townsite that locates the mercantile center of downtown.

S.C.

48 Jack's Roller Rink

Jack's Roller Rink was located at the corner of N. Fourth Street and University Avenue. Constructed in 1907, it was designed by Crookston architect, Bert Keck. One of several entertainment venues in downtown built during the early decades of the city's growth, it had a vast flexible space that could be used for dances, an orchestra and wrestling exhibitions. It served as a temporary venue for church services when nearby St Michael's Church suffered a fire. Other activities and businesses include the Marble Works for cemetery markers, a confectionery store and winter vehicle storage. In 1948, the store front was remodeled for Forx Motor Company to create a showroom. In the 1950s, the building was identified as a potential fallout shelter with its 18" concrete and steel floor between the main floor and the basement. Jack's and its adjacent buildings were razed to make way for a multi-use development.

S.C.

Lost Jewish Neighborhood

49

The inner city neighborhood just south of the Great Northern Rail Road tracks was razed in the late 1960s and early 1970s as part of the City's urban renewal efforts. This largely immigrant neighborhood was originally home to the City's largest concentration of Jewish residents as well as the first Synagogue and Jewish school. Emigrating from Lithuania in 1892, part of Czarist Russia at the time, Rabbi Benjamin Papermaster served both the local Jewish congregants and many throughout the region for more than 40 years. By the mid-1930s, the Jewish community had started to move out of the neighborhood and in some cases, out of the City. The demolition of houses and small businesses made way for the Grand Forks Housing Authority accommodations, the Grand Forks Senior Center, the Grand Forks Police Station and the DeMers Overpass that shifted much of the commercial activity from downtown to South Washington Street.

S.C.

50 The Ghost Sidewalk

Just a bit south of 11th Avenue, a sidewalk without a road connects Belmont and Reeves Drive. This sidewalk traces the route of Clark Street (or 12th Avenue) which appeared on maps from 1916, but by 1921 it had been closed and four houses built on its former route. The sidewalk once provided walking access to the Lutheran College which stood on the west side of Belmont Road between 13th Avenue and 12th Avenue. Built in 1892 in an imposing Second Empire style, the Lutheran College began as a high school before being purchased by Hans H. Aaker, the former president of Concordia College. He turned it into a business school and eventually traded the building to Lutheran Bible College. Lutheran Bible College sold the building in 1933. It was demolished in 1935. Today the ghost sidewalk between Belmont and Reeves is a ghostly reminder of this neighborhood's past.

W.C.

Afterword

This project owes debts of gratitude to many people including Cynthia Prescott, Nikki Berg Burin, William Caraher, and Eric Burin in the University of North Dakota Department of History and American Indian Studies, and Susan Caraher, who is the Grand Forks Historic Preservation Coordinator. Berg Burin served as the editor of this first volume of fifty essays. Students in her class and Caraher's Practicum in Writing, Editing, and Publishing wrote and edited most of these essays respectively. They also collaborated on design decisions throughout the publishing process.

This work is the first of three volumes which will together offer 150, 150-word essays in celebration of Grand Forks 150th anniversary as a white, European settlement on the Red River in North Dakota. Over the next two years, we will solicit more 150-words essays on topics from Grand Forks' distant and recent past. If you have an idea drop us a line!

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